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Appropriation for the National Encampment of the Grand Army
of the Republic.

REMARKS

OF

HON. HOSEA H. ROCKWELL,

OF NEW YORK.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Thursday, June 30, 1892.

The House having under consideration the report of the conference committee on the District of Columbia appropriation bill—

Mr. ROCKWELL said:

Mr. SPEAKER: I can not sit here and quietly let pass the insinuations which have been made with reference to an organization of which I have the honor to be a member, and which has been invited to hold its annual encampment in the city of Washington during the coming fall. Nor, when I remember of what class of citizens that organization is constituted, where it is distributed, the influence which it has in this country, and its worth, can I afford to sit here and let it go to the country that every man who is opposed to this proposition upon the floor of this House is a Democrat and every man in favor of it is a Republican.

Gentlemen on my side of the House have said this should not be made a party matter; and it is for this reason—that it may not be made a party matter, that it may not be made a partisan matter—that I rise to enter my protest against what has been said and the action which has thus far been taken by Democratic members on this proposition. Why, sir, do you know who they are who have been invited here? Do you know that this organization comprises within its ranks 7,000 posts, containing over half a million of the very best citizenship of this country? Do you know that this organization comprises within its ranks the President of the United States, Senators in Congress, members of the House of Representatives, gentlemen representing the Supreme bench of the United States and the supreme bench of every State in this Union? Do you know that these are the gentlemen who constitute a large element in this organization. It does not embrace simply the poor, old, crippled veterans to whom the gentleman from Iowa referred as crawling or staggering here upon crutches; it is not such alone that we are asked to do honor to on this occasion.

Now, these men have been invited here. A very distinguished citizen of this nation, whose name has recently been in every mouth, once said with regard to a great political question: "It is a condition, not a theory, that confronts us." Now, that is

exactly the state of affairs here. The condition is that this great organization has been invited not alone by the citizens of the District of Columbia or the city of Washington. They have been invited here, as they understand and as they have the right to understand, to be the guests of the nation at the nation's capital. This is not the first time they have visited this capital. When almost thirty years ago they were here in such large numbers there was no question raised about their entertainment. We were all glad to see them. The nation was glad to see them come here, to give them welcome, and to do them honor. And I was glad to hear the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. COMPTON] advert to that great parade, when the armies of Grant and Sherman marched up the avenue and received the plaudits of the nation. Thirty years have since elapsed. Those men have grown old and gray. After the war they formed this organization, based upon the principles of fraternity, loyalty, and charity: and, as I have said, that organization has grown until it comprises within its ranks half a million of the best citizenship of this country. Year by year they have held their national encampments. Cities have vied with each other in inviting them. When they were invited to Boston the State of Massachusetts made an appropriation to assist in entertaining them: the city of Boston made an appropriation for the same purpose. When they went to Detroit that city, through its municipal authorities, made an appropriation to entertain them. They were invited to come here.

The invitation did not emanate from the citizens of Washington alone. It was signed by representatives of the national Government—among others by the Commissioners who have charge of the affairs of this District; it was officially signed by them. The Grand Army had the right to believe that the invitation came, not from the citizens of Washington, not from the Grand Army organization in this District, but that they were invited to come here to be the nation's guests, for the invitation came from the agents of the nation having charge of the municipal affairs of this District.

It has been said there was a guaranty fund. So there was. Nobody believed at the start that \$50,000 would not be a sufficient amount to properly entertain the encampment. It turns out that \$50,000 is insufficient. Why, Mr. Speaker, do you know that within a radius of twenty-four hours' ride by rail from the city of Washington there are living 230,000 members of the Grand Army of the Republic? Do you know that in the States constituting New England there are 62,000 members of this organization?

Do you know that in the State of New York there are 45,000 members; that in the great State of Pennsylvania there are 55,000; in New Jersey, 9,000; in Maryland, 4,000; in West Virginia, 4,000; in Ohio, 50,000, making in all in round numbers 230,000. Is the gentleman from Missouri aware that in his own State there are 20,000 members of the Grand Army of the Republic?

Mr. DOCKERY. I am quite aware of it, and I am aware of the further fact that when we extended an invitation to this Grand Army the citizens of our State made ample contribution to entertain them, there being a surplus of \$12,000, which was devoted to charity. [Applause.]

Mr. ROCKWELL. Now, let me answer the gentleman from Missouri right here. It is a condition, not a theory, that we are meeting. Let me say that it is impossible in the city of Washington to raise by subscription enough money to take care adequately of all the soldiers, with their friends, who will come here.

A MEMBER. Why, then, were they invited?

Mr. ROCKWELL. I say that when the invitation was given nobody anticipated that there was to be so great an attendance. I have just stated that there are 230,000 members of the Grand Army within a radius of twenty-four hours' ride by rail from the city of Washington. There are over 200,000 more old soldiers who are not members. These veterans who were mustered out of service nearly thirty years ago desire to come here with their wives and their sons and their daughters to revisit the scenes connected so closely in history with their past service. They have so desired for years, and it was to meet this well-known desire that the invitation was extended. It was to give the veterans and their sons and daughters an opportunity to revisit the Capitol which they saved and the fields on which they fought. Within a radius of a hundred miles from Washington are all the battlefields over which the glorious Army of the Potomac marched and fought for four long years. This encampment gives the half million survivors of that army, now grown gray, easy opportunity to revisit those fields. These are some reasons why so many more veterans are coming to Washington than have ever attended any other national encampment.

Mr. MEREDITH. Will the gentleman allow me to ask him one question?

Mr. ROCKWELL. Yes, sir.

Mr. MEREDITH. I want to ask you in all seriousness whether or not there is any warrant in the Constitution of the United States to appropriate the money from the Treasury of the Government for any such purpose?

Mr. ROCKWELL. I answer the gentleman that there is just as much warrant for making this appropriation from the joint fund as there is for making it from the funds of the District of Columbia. It is as constitutional to make it in the usual way as it will be to make an exception against the old soldiers. If there is any constitutional provision in the way at all to prevent it, then the whole operation should be voted down, and you should not provide a dollar for this purpose.

Mr. BUTLER. That is the right view.

Mr. ROCKWELL. If it is to be voted at all, do not make a distinction with reference to this fund as against every other appropriation made out of the funds of the District of Columbia. You provide for other expenses which have no more constitutional warrant than this without question. You buy pictures and statuary, adorn parks and support zoölogical and botanical gardens and furnish music to the populace —

Mr. MEREDITH. My friend does not answer my question. Now I assume that he is a lawyer and a good one. I take it that he is a constitutional lawyer —

Mr. ROCKWELL. Well, I will admit that. [Laughter.]

Mr. MEREDITH. And I ask if there is any warrant in the Constitution to give away the people's money for such purpose as that contemplated here?



Mr. SNODGRASS. And if so, to point out the clause of the Constitution in which it may be found.

Mr. ROCKWELL. I say that if there is any warrant at all—

Mr. MEREDITH. But the question is, is there any warrant?

Mr. ROCKWELL. If there is any warrant to vote away the people's money raised by taxation in the District for the purpose of such entertainment, there is just as much warrant for voting the provision contained in the original amendment. We have no more right to take it exclusively from the funds of the District of Columbia than from the Government Treasury, when you look at it as a constitutional question. The \$75,000 proposition, about which I understand there is no question, is recommended by the very gentlemen who are now raising this constitutional quibble.

Mr. MEREDITH. My friend has not answered my question, although he has taken an oath to support the Constitution he will not answer it.

Mr. ROCKWELL. In answer to the gentleman I will say that the municipal powers of the city of Washington, having been entrusted to this Congress, it is virtually its common council; and I believe that the entertainment of this organization at this time is just as much a proper municipal expense as various other items about which there is no question. It is as much a "public use" within the meaning of the Constitution.

Mr. MEREDITH. But the common council has no right to vote away the money of the people except in the manner that the law warrants them to vote it.

Mr. ROCKWELL. Congress is the common council, and may make any law for the expenditure of money not prohibited by the Constitution. Other municipalities have held this to be a public use of corporate funds, and as such constitutional. It was done in Boston: it was done in Detroit: it was done in San Francisco without question, and this is precisely the same proposition.

Mr. BUTLER. Let me ask the gentleman if in his judgment it was legal for them to do it in those places? Is it legal to use the public funds in Boston or in any other place for such a purpose?

Mr. ROCKWELL. I think it is. You raise money by taxation, erect statues in honor of dead soldiers, and pay it out of the Federal Treasury, but you quibble when it comes to honoring the living ones. You appropriate money without stint to the Columbian Exposition and call it a "public purpose" because it teaches lessons in history and the arts. Will not this occasion equally well teach lessons in history and patriotism?

Sir, the teaching which will come from the spectacle of half a million citizen-soldiers and soldier-citizens, revisiting the scenes where thirty years ago they saved the nation's life, received a nation's thanks, and then quietly returned to the pursuits of civil life, will be of the utmost value to the rising generation, and may well warrant the expenditure by that nation of this paltry amount as for a public purpose of the highest degree—an object lesson in American patriotism.

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